

imPRessions

A monthly MSU PRSSA newsletter

October 2008

In this issue...

pg 1: President's Letter
pg 1: Coming up this month
pg 2: A PR Cultural Experience
pg 3: Professional Profile: Mary Henige
pg 3: The FriB Files
pg 4: Tips and Tricks
pg 4: When I Grow Up...
pg 5: Interviewed: Russ White
pg 6: Member of the Month
pg 6: What to Pack for National Conference

Coming up this month

Oct. 1: National Conference registration extended deadline
Oct. 3: Homecoming Parade
Oct. 7: General Meeting
Oct. 14: Bone Marrow Registration Drive
Oct. 14: PRSSA Fundraiser at Melting Moments 5-8 p.m.
Oct. 16: FRIB Frenzy Day
Oct. 21: General Meeting
Oct. 24-28: PRSSA National Conference in Detroit

All general meetings are held at 7 p.m. in 147 CAS.



President's Letter

Nick Lucido

Greetings PRSSA members!

I know that Homecoming, Halloween and everything in between is keeping you busy this month, but October is also a busy month for PRSSA!

We have two general meetings planned in addition to the 2008 National Conference in Detroit. Our Chapter has the most registrants attending a National Conference in the history of PRSSA at MSU- congratulations! The Conference will be such a great experience for those who attend. If you aren't able to go, we will be Tweeting live from the Conference and come back to share everything we learned with you.

October is also the month that we are launching Hubbell Connections, our student-run firm. If you are interested in working in any facet of public relations when you graduate, Hubbell Connections is an important component to your career. I encourage you to apply for one of the open positions. Contact Courtney Curran for more information on that.

I would also like to congratulate Ragina George for being selected as September Member of the Month. Ragina has attended all general meetings so far and has volunteered for multiple events that we are participating in. Keep up the great work!

If you ever have any questions or suggestions, come talk to me or any other e-board member. We really do love to hear from you. Thanks for making us such a great Chapter.

Sincerely,

Nick Lucido
Chapter President

Stay Connected

Visit our Web site: www.msuprssa.org

E-mail us: prssa@msu.edu

Follow us on Twitter: MSUPRSSA

Join our Facebook group: PRSSA... it's a mouthful!

A PR Cultural Experience

By Whitney Geller

In the past year or two the traveling bug, the need to seek out new destinations and adventures, bit me. I loved visiting my friend in Europe and studying abroad in Asia. Yet, each of these trips was for a short period of time; a week, two weeks, a month at the most. I wanted a real cultural experience. I wanted to leave behind my home and comforts and submerge myself in a culture. I decided I would get an internship and live in China.

Why China? Why not? China seems to be taking over the world, with their ever-growing economy, expanding cities, the host for the 2008 Olympic Games and the fact that I had been studying the Chinese language for the past 4 years. For the next month I searched online, sending my resume out to hundreds of public relations firms. Of all the places I contacted, two responded. One of which I took, working for a European fashion company called DressCode in Beijing.

On May 14 I left the United States feeling terrified and excited. I barely knew anything about what lie ahead for me. I had no idea where I was living, what it would be like, what exactly I would be doing at my job and if I would even be able to communicate while there. After 16 hours on a plane I arrived in the smog-filled city of Beijing, ready to start my new life.

Even though everything I planned for was done through the Internet with little to no guarantee, I found everything worked out great. My job, which I started one week after arriving due to my prolonged jetlag, was wonderful. The company, DressCode, owned a store, which introduced new clothing lines from Europe into the Asian market. If the line showed potential in the store it would then be sold to

multiple other retailers throughout Beijing and Shanghai.

Like many internships I worked on a variety of projects and tasks. The store and office were located right down the street from each other, and so I would often work a few hours in the office and then a few in the store. Working in the store was not just another boring retail job. I was there to watch and learn the Asian market. What the Chinese women were buying, who was buying what and why. In the office I worked on promoting the store through media connections, event planning and Web site updating. While there I found an American designer looking to sell her clothing line in China. I organized, planned and put on a trunk show showcasing her designs. The event had a full runway show with models, photographers, and guests, as well as personal fittings for customers and cocktails for all.

While working there I not only learned about the Asian retail market, but I also learned how to handle the media. It is much easier there to get an ad in *Elle* or *Glamour* magazine. Most of the promotions I worked on were through various

Beijing entertainment Web sites. Yet, there was really no way to promote through radio, TV, or even newspapers unless you were a large name brand. I also learned about the fickle and meticulous Chinese customers. They helped me learn why some things sell and work in China and why others don't. I learned about the work force in China, the economy and their government.

It was not always easy, and in the beginning often hard. I made plenty of mistakes, got lost, couldn't speak with 90 percent of the population, and occasionally felt lonely. But the majority of the time I had a blast. I met tons of new friends from around the world. I visited and saw new places every week. I ate exotic and delicious foods everyday. I learned about twenty new things every day be it at work, talking to my multicultural friends, or simply riding my bike around the vast city. It was an amazing experience and one that has changed who I am and what I want for the better. I would recommend that anyone interested in something different and challenging, to just go for it.

Associate E-board member Whitney Geller can be reached at:
gellerwh@msu.edu



Whitney, center, with friends at the Olympic women's soccer game.

PROfessional

R As told to Jenni Lewis

o
f
i
l
e

Mary Henige, APR
PRSA 2008 International
Conference Co-Chair

Q. What made you want to enter the corporate side of public relations?

A. Working for a corporation allows me to better understand my “client” and the automotive business with great depth. Additionally, GM has more than 500 communications professionals globally so I’ve had the opportunity to have several positions throughout my career.

Q. What was your favorite campaign for GM that you were involved in? Why? Describe your role.

A. I’ve had the privilege to play a role in several interesting campaigns. My favorite campaign was leading the communications strategy for Pontiac when we gave G6 vehicles to every member of Oprah’s studio audience. When I was at the taping, I realized from the stories she showed, how important vehicles are to our ability to live, work and prosper. It was an amazing to play a small role in helping to change many lives.

Q. Do you have to know a lot about cars to get a job in the automotive industry?

A. Whether you know about cars and the auto industry when you begin your career isn’t as important as how you approach learning about your client once you join a company. You can’t provide good counsel unless you understand the product you’re trying to promote as well as the competition.

Q. Tell us a little about your involvement in the preparation of the PRSA 2008 International Conference.

A. A year ago, PRSA Chair and CEO Jeff Julin asked if I’d co-chair the International Conference with Gerry Corbett, APR Fellow PRSA. I was incredibly honored, and truthfully, a bit intimidated. I helped to bring the conference to Detroit with GM’s backing so I knew I’d have a role, but not of this magnitude. Over the years I have learned a great deal from my PRSA experiences. As a student, I determined that I wanted to pursue corporate public relations, and I “picked up” a couple of excellent mentors. When I began my career in Orlando, I joined the PRSA Chapter. Again, I gained a mentor and valuable contacts. When I returned to Detroit three years later, I joined the Detroit Chapter and co-chaired the student and internship committee. I was the president of the Chapter in 2003, again, an incredible experience learning to lead a volunteer organization with 500 members.

Q. How much interaction will you have with the students at the PRSSA National Conference aside from seeing them at the general sessions with big names like Bob Lutz and Mitch Albom?

A. I plan to attend as much of the students’ conference as possible. GM has sponsored the PRSSA conference for the last few years. It’s an excellent opportunity for us to recruit some of the brightest student leaders. We’ve hired several of these interns over the last few years including MSU’s own Jennie Ecclestone. This summer, Spartan Jenni Lewis interned at Chevrolet. I’m speaking at the automotive panel on Saturday afternoon. You’ll also see me Sunday afternoon at the Bateman presentation – GM was the sponsor this year. I’ll also be attending the Monday night awards reception at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Feel free to stop and introduce yourself to me. I love interacting with students so please don’t hesitate.

The FRIB Files

by Monica Fineis

As Geoff Koch, communication manager from the National Superconducting Cyclotron Laboratory (NSCL) explained at our first general meeting this year, MSU is bidding to land the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams (FRIB).

So you already know what it stands for. The Facility for Rare Isotope Beams sounds pretty intense, and it is. But it boils down to two things we all can understand: money and jobs for Michigan; not to mention, huge bragging rights for MSU!

We’ve been gearing up for FRIB Frenzy Day at MSU for the past couple of weeks. The different promotional events have ranged from spots on Spartan Podcast to a huge “Bring FRIB to our Crib!” poster at the Barack Obama rally. What this is all leading up to is FRIB Frenzy Day on October 16. This is when we will be handing out free FRIB T-shirts to students on campus to spread the word about this opportunity and show the student support of the facility.

Not only do we believe NSCL at MSU would most successfully operate FRIB, without this upgrade, it could be the end of the lab; the U.S.’s last national university lab of its kind. So tell your friends about FRIB, join the Facebook page: Michigan’s Rare Opportunity: FRIB, and wear your shirt on October 16!

Tips and Tricks

Edited by Julia Wendzinski

Here's a list of some of the most common writing mistakes made in formal writing. This article has been adapted from an E-mail being passed around to those in the public relations field titled "Writing Mistakes- Dr. J. Patrick Murphy."

The Dreaded Passive Voice. This is a form of writing to be avoided at all costs. We must get actors to act and avoid the business of having things done to them. Just please eliminate the passive voice from your writing.

The Three Rules of Writing. There are only three rules for good writing: omit needless words, omit needless words, omit needless words. It is recommend that you go over anything you write and apply these three rules, one at a time.

Negative Construction. When writing try to avoid it as much as possible because the reader has to work too hard to figure out what the writer means—positively. Rewrite the sentence using a verb that means what you say without the negative word. (Rather than saying, "he did not succeed," say "he failed.")

Mark Twain Rule. Remember the Mark Twain Rule of writing: "The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between the lightning and the lightning bug!" Make sure your words mean what you intend.

Chesterton Rule. Ending a sentence with a preposition is only a venial sin these days. However, remember Chesterton: "Ending a sentence with a preposition is one thing up with I will not put!"

Mixed Referents. Never mix a singular noun with a plural referent. Sexist language must be avoided, but it must be done in a way without grammatical error. Changing the noun to a plural form usually works nicely.

see **Tips**, page 5

When I Grow Up...

As told to Courtney Sipperley

Danielle Weller

MSU PRSSA Alumna

Danielle Weller works in the corporate communications department at Jackson National Life Insurance Company, a financial services company that helps people plan for retirement.



Q: Describe your experiences after graduation.

A: In the spring of my senior year, I was working for a public relations firm downtown. I approached them a couple of times throughout the semester to ask about the possibility of staying on full time after graduation. While they did finally offer me a position, I had already interviewed with Jackson and decided this was a better fit for me. One piece of advice I can give about looking for a full time job is that no one knows what you are capable of better than you do. Be your own advocate. Keep track of the projects you've worked and responsibilities you've had and don't be afraid to share them in an interview.

Q: Describe your current position at Jackson National.

A: In corporate social responsibility (CSR), I manage our charitable grant application process, associate gift matching, volunteer projects, internal CSR newsletter, and recycling/sustainability efforts. In internal communications (IC), I work on a company newsletter, plan an annual all-employee meeting with our CEO and coordinate communication between executives and front line staff. In my day-to-day work, I am 80 percent CSR and 20 percent IC.

Q: What do you like most about Corporate Communications?

A: I love my job. What is most rewarding to me is that I have a direct hand in ensuring that Jackson is making the most of its charitable dollars, associate volunteer hours and sustainability efforts. My position allows me to have face time with associates, executives and the community every day.

Q: What is the biggest challenge you have faced thus far in your career?

A: The transition into the corporate working world was a big surprise to me. There were office politics and personalities that were disheartening to me as a new graduate. After two and a half years out of school, I feel like I better understand the corporate world and am grateful to work for such a successful and respectable company.

Q: How did PRSSA help you prepare for the future?

A: The networking I did with local professionals through PRSSA had a direct correlation to Jackson deciding to hire me. I would encourage all of you to take every opportunity you have through PRSSA to interact with professionals, gain industry knowledge and experience professional opportunities.

Tips continued from page 4

Avoid Contractions Rule. This is done in formal writing.

Avoid clichés Rule. These are tired expressions that must be avoided like the plague.

Semicolons. Semicolons are used to separate two complete and similar sentences. Watch your colons, regular, semi and intestinal.

Quotation Marks. Use them carefully. The rule is to use them to set off a word or phrase when it is meant in a different way than how folks normally define it. Otherwise avoid them.

Commas. These nasty squiggle things are confusing. But writers need to learn when to hold ‘em and when to fold ‘em. Try reading the sentence aloud with and without them.

Capitals. Most of us want to capitalize too much. Avoid capitalization, thanks. Unless there is a specific reason—supported by a specific rule—it should not be capitalized. Emphasize with word choice and strong style.

Etc. Avoid etc., i.e., and all such nonsense in formal writing. Write plainly. Etc. means “and more of the same things.” Is that what is intended? Probably not, that would be boring and violates the rule about omitting needless words.

Person. Generally, only one person is used, never mixing persons and, almost always, avoiding the second person in formal writing.

Slashes. Avoid the slash in formal writing. Say what you mean—in words.

Quotes. The punctuation goes inside the quotation marks in this country. The British do it the other way around, so unless you’re writing for the Queen, keep periods inside quotes.

Interviewed: Russ White

As told to Courtney Sipperley



Courtney Sipperley talks with MSU PRSSA’s newest addition, Academic Advisor Russ White.

Q: What is your position at Michigan State University?

A: I am communications manager in University Relations. UR is the central public relations office at MSU. We have two areas – marketing and creative services and media relations. I work in the media relations area and work proactively to gain positive attention for MSU in the local, state, national, and international media. I work to cultivate strong relationships with journalists in order to obtain effective placement of positive stories in targeted media.

I also create podcast content for Spartan Podcast; these podcasts generate thousands of hits.

Q: What other professional experience do you have in the Public Relations field?

A: I have worked in media relations at MSU for over 11 years and was an award-winning radio producer before that.

Q: What made you want to become the Academic Advisor for PRSSA?

A: I believe that anyone who works at a university should do what they can to help the students gain the best possible experience they can from MSU. I enjoy working with the smart, enthusiastic students in PRSSA. Most of us wouldn’t be where we are today without a couple people in our lives who went beyond the call of duty to provide a rich and rewarding internship or strong and practical guidance in some way. I had a couple people like that in my life who are big reasons I’m where I am today. I hope I can provide a similar experience for some students.

Q: What are your goals and expectations for our chapter?

A: I want to do whatever I can to make the MSU PRSSA experience as rich and rewarding and valuable as possible for the members.

Q: What is your favorite part of public relations? Of teaching?

A: I like public relations because I like working with media. I love the whole media industry and how it works. I also love MSU; so it’s rewarding to work to gain positive attention for and enhance the image of this university I love. The part of teaching I like is part of what I wrote above. If I can help a student or two gain a rewarding experience at MSU that leads the realization of some of their goals, I’m happy. Knowledge and experience is something one can give away but still keep!

Member of the Month September

Congrats to our September Member of the Month:

Ragina Smith!

Ragina, a communication and public relations junior from Detroit, has attended every general meeting so far and has volunteered for several of our events. She's a great example of someone that is making the most of her PRSSA membership and all that our organization has to offer. Ragina aspires to work in entertainment public relations or travel and tourism.

Congratulations Ragina and keep up the great work!



What to Pack: A General Guide of What to Bring to National Conference

Women:

- Dress pants
- Blouses
- Blazer
- 2 dressier outfits
- Pumps/dress shoes
- Band Aids (for blisters!)
- Professional purse

Men:

- Dress pants
- Button-up shirts
- Suit
- Dress shoes

Both:

- Resumes (30)
- Business cards (50)
- Padfolio
- Tide pen
- Breath mints
- Lint roller

Fall 2008 Executive Board Members

President: Nick Lucido
Vice President: Christina Capoferi
Agency Director: Courtney Curran
Public Relations Director: Jenni Lewis
Secretary: Aubrey Zimmerman
Finance/Fundraising Chair: Tony Willis
Publication Director: Julia Wendzinski
Alumni Relations Director: Courtney Sipperley
Bateman Chair: Monica Fineis
Webmaster: Angela Minicuci
Sophomore Chair: Kristine Kendall
Associate E-board Member: Whitney Geller

Academic Advisor: Russ White
Professional Advisor: Jen Holton
Bateman Advisor: Amber Shinn

For E-board member contact information, check out the "Contact Us" tab at msuprssa.org.

**Working on a PR project? Learning something interesting in class?
Tell us about it!**

Writing an article for *imPRessions* is a great way to get published and have some material for your portfolio. Articles can be up to 400 words and the deadline for the November issue is Thursday, October 23. If you're interested or have any questions, feel free to contact Publication Director Julia Wendzinski at wendzins@msu.edu or talk to her after a meeting.